

**Categorical Exclusion Documentation Format for Actions Other Than Hazardous Fuels  
and Fire Rehabilitation Actions**

**Vulture Mine Road AML Backfills**

*DOI-BLM-AZ-P010-2013-0021-CX*

**A. Background**

BLM Office: Hassayampa Field Office (HFO)

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: NA

Proposed Action Title/Type: Vulture Mine Road AML Backfills

Location of Proposed Action: T6N, R5W, NESE of section 6

Description of Proposed Action: Based on recommendations from the Arizona Game & Fish Dept., BLM would backfill two open shafts and one prospect pit located on public lands along Vulture Mine Road, about 5 miles south of Wickenburg, AZ. The sites to be reclaimed are: 1) AZ6N5W06001 (>200 ft. deep shaft easily seen from Vulture Mine Road); 2) AZ6N5W06002 (~15 ft. deep shaft adjacent to AZ6N5W06001); and, 3) AZ6N5W06003 (prospect pit).

Reclaiming the AML features would significantly improve public safety for people recreating at these easily accessible sites, as the associated physical safety hazards would be permanently eliminated. The sites to be backfilled are:

<u>BLM Name</u>	<u>Feature Type</u>	<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
AZ6N5W06001	Open Shaft	33.889069	-112.813247
AZ6N5W06002	Open Shaft	33.888756	-112.813653
AZ6N5W06003	Prospect Pit	33.889458	-112.814678

**B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

Land Use Plan (LUP) Name: Bradshaw-Harquahala Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan

Date Approved/Amended: April 2010

☐ The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

☒ The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

The Bradshaw-Harquahala Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan, approved April 2010, states on page A-24, in Public Safety – Standard Operating Procedures – Abandoned Mine Lands: “Inspect abandoned mine land sites to identify all physical hazards presenting a safety risk to the public, and take appropriate action to mitigate any hazards and prevent public access to abandoned mine land contaminated areas.”

**C: Compliance with NEPA:**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 Departmental Manual (DM) 11.9: Appendix 4, J (8) – Installation of minor devices to protect human life, (e.g., grates across mines), and, Appendix 4, J (10) -- Removal of structures and materials of no historical value, such as abandoned automobiles, fences, and buildings, including those built in trespass and reclamation of the site when little or no surface disturbance is involved.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 11.9 apply.

I considered the following when reviewing the proposed project:

- The act of backfilling the open mine shafts and prospect pit will have a beneficial effect on public health & safety, given that the sites are located in a high-use recreation area along Vulture Mine Road. In particular, the AZ6N5W06001 shaft is easily visible and accessible from Vulture Mine Road, and is especially hazardous because of its >200 ft. depth, and the fact that its collar consists of unstable loose rock and dirt.
- No Threatened & Endangered (T&E) habitat or species are present in this area, according to wildlife surveys completed by biologists from BLM and the Arizona Game & Fish Dept.
- Cultural surveys have been completed for the sites. No cultural or historic features would be impacted by the proposed backfilling. Standard stipulations apply, along with the following special stipulation: “During the reclamation work, an environmental monitor will be present to ensure that the work is carried out away from all historic features”.
- An LR2000 Mining Claim Geo Report run on February 20, 2013 showed there are no active claims at any of the three AML sites. There had previously been one active association placer claim onsite, the Hidden Gold claim (AMC414396), but that claim has recently been renamed the Lucky Goose 3 claim, and reduced in size from 160 acres to only 20 acres located in the W2SWSE of section 6, so that the three AML sites are now outside of the claim boundaries.

**D: Signature**

**Review:** *We have determined that the proposal is in accordance with the categorical exclusion criteria and that it would not involve any significant environmental effects (see Attachment 1). Therefore, it is categorically excluded from further environmental review.*

**Prepared by:** \_\_\_\_\_/S/\_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew Plis  
Project Lead**

**Reviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_/S/\_\_\_\_\_

**Leah Baker  
Planning & Environmental Coordinator**

**Approved by:** \_\_\_\_\_/S?\_\_\_\_\_

**D. Remington Hawes  
Field Manager**

**Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact: Environmental Engineer Matt Plis, Phoenix District Office, 21605 N. 7th Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85027, 623-580-5500.

**Note:** A separate decision document (see Attachment 2) must be prepared for the action covered by the CX.

BLM Categorical Exclusions: Extraordinary Circumstances<sup>1</sup>

**Attachment 1**

The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) apply. The project would:		
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> The act of backfilling the open mine shafts, adit, pits and prospect pits will have a positive impact on public health & safety.
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness or wilderness study areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (Executive Order 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed reclamation work would not significantly impact any of the resources listed above.
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)]?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> The environmental effects of the proposed reclamation work are not controversial. The Phoenix District has implemented several similar projects in recent years.
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> The environmental effects of the proposed reclamation work are predictable and well-known.
5. Establish a precedent for future action, or represent a decision in principle about future actions, with potentially significant environmental effects?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> This reclamation work would not set a precedent for future actions, or represent a decision in principle for future actions.
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> There are no significant cumulative effects associated with this reclamation work.
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the Bureau or office?		

<sup>1</sup> If an action has any of these impacts, you must conduct NEPA analysis.

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <b>X</b>	<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed reclamation work would not significantly impact any listed or eligible NRHP properties.
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <b>X</b>	<b>Rationale:</b> A wildlife survey of the sites by biologists from BLM and the Arizona Game & Fish Dept. found that there will be no impacts to listed or proposed T&E species or habitat.
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <b>X</b>	<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed reclamation work will not violate any Federal, State, local or tribal laws or regulations.
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <b>X</b>	<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed reclamation work will have no adverse effect on low income or minority populations.
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners, or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <b>X</b>	<b>Rationale:</b> There are no known Indian sacred sites in or near the Abandoned Mine Land sites to be reclaimed under the proposed action.
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area, or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <b>X</b>	<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed reclamation work will not promote the growth of non-native invasive species.

**Decision**  
**Attachment 2**

**Project Description:** Based on recommendations from the Arizona Game & Fish Dept., BLM would backfill two open shafts and one prospect pit located on public lands along Vulture Mine Road, about 5 miles south of Wickenburg, AZ. The sites to be reclaimed are: 1) AZ6N5W06001 (>200 ft. deep shaft easily seen from Vulture Mine Road); 2) AZ6N5W06002 (~15 ft. deep shaft adjacent to AZ6N5W06001); and, 3) AZ6N5W06003 (prospect pit). Reclaiming the AML features would significantly improve public safety for people recreating at these easily accessible sites, as the associated physical safety hazards would be permanently eliminated. The sites to be backfilled are:

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AZ6N5W06003	Prospect Pit	33.889458	-112.814678

**Decision:** Based on a review of the project described above and field office staff recommendations, I have determined that the project is in conformance with the land use plan and is categorically excluded from further environmental analysis. It is my decision to approve the action as proposed.

**Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and the attached Form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed at the Hassayampa Field Office, 21605 North 7th Avenue, Phoenix, AZ, 85027, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition (pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) (request) for a stay (suspension) of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the Office of the Solicitor (Department of the Interior, Office of the Field Solicitor, Sandra Day O'Connor U.S. Court House #404, 401 West Washington Street SPC44, Phoenix, AZ 85003-2151) (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
3. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
4. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_/S/\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_02/20/2013\_\_\_\_\_  
D. Remington Hawes, Manager, Hassayampa Field Office

Attachment: Form 1842-1